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*William E. Barton*

THE INFLUENCE OF ILLINOIS IN  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

BY

WILLIAM E. BARTON, D. D., LL. D.



REPRINTED FROM THE TRANSACTIONS OF THE ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY FOR THE YEAR 1921





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ABRAHAM LINCOLN



## THE INFLUENCE OF ILLINOIS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

BY WILLIAM E. BARTON, D.D., LL.D.

Lincoln and Illinois were twin-born. Abraham Lincoln first saw light on Sunday, February 11, 1809. Nine days before his birth, Illinois, by Act of Congress, began its autonomous existence as a territory. The future commonwealth and its most illustrious citizen began life together, both unconscious of the influence which each was to exert upon the destiny of the other.

The first seven years of Lincoln's life were spent in Kentucky, and twice seven years following were spent in Indiana. Both of those States did well by him; but when he came to his twenty-first year, Illinois, his own State, beckoned to him, and he came. He came in the dawn of his young manhood, and the whole of that manhood he spent as a citizen of this, his State. From the time he entered the young commonwealth in the Spring of 1830, driving an ox-team through the rich, deep mud of her prairies, until he left it to be inaugurated President of the United States, he lived in Illinois. Gladly yielding him to the Nation, when the Nation called, Illinois still knew him as her own, and believed in him and loved him; and when his work was accomplished, and crowned by his martyrdom, Illinois stood tearfully awaiting the arrival of that majestic funeral train that wound its way westward through many cities from the Nation's capitol, and received back again into the heart of her soil the precious dust of her own Abraham Lincoln.

It should be an interesting and profitable inquiry, what influence had Illinois upon Abraham Lincoln? Did she help or hinder in his development? Might it have been as well for him and the State had he lived elsewhere? These are legitimate questions, and not unprofitable; the more so because I do not find that they have been answered, or even very seriously asked. Among the biographers of Lincoln, no one, I think, traced his life so lovingly in its relation to that of his State, as Hon. Isaac N. Arnold. He approached the possibility of considering this question, but did not pursue the inquiry far, nor did he, apparently, arrive at a convincing answer. He said:

"When, in 1830, Lincoln became a citizen of Illinois, this great commonwealth, now the third or fourth state in the Union, and treading fast upon the heels of Ohio and Pennsylvania, was on the frontier with a population a little exceeding one hundred and fifty thousand. In 1860, when Lincoln was elected President, it had nearly two millions, and was rapidly becoming the center of the Republic. Perhaps he was fortunate in selecting Illinois as his home."—*Life of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 29.

Mr. Arnold went on to show how central to the Union Illinois had become, and he wrote of the growing importance of Illinois geographically, but he did not in any definite way undertake to answer his question, whether it was well for Lincoln to have lived here, other than with a judicial qualification. "Perhaps he was fortunate in selecting Illinois as his home."

It seems to me that the time has come for a more positive answer. I believe that Lincoln would have been a great man if he had lived in another State, but that Illinois contributed to his making some elements which were of particular significance, and which may have been indispensable to his preparation for the particular work to which God and the Nation called him.

## TWO THEORIES OF THE ORIGIN OF GREAT MEN.

There are two opposing theories of the origin of great men. One of them, derived from Buckle and his school, attempts to account for all men, both individually and racially, by their environment, and by the conditions of the times in which they live. The other, of whose conviction Carlyle is the indignant spokesman\*, explains not the man by his times, but his times by the man. Emerson agreed with Carlyle, and went even farther. Emerson would seem to say that the Atlantic Ocean was there because nothing smaller would have answered the purposes of Columbus. Columbus needed a large earth and a round earth and a wide ocean to express what was inherent in himself. The world and all external conditions are to be explained by the man, and not the man by his world.

Something of this latter theory must be held as to genius. It has its own laws. It produces its great exponents in manner and form which cannot be predicted. It is impossible to explain Robert Burns without Scotland, but Scotland alone does not explain Burns. Scotland has been on the map for a long time, and still there is but one Robert Burns. Henry Ward Beecher stood at the foot of his class in Amherst College. Since his day many men in Amherst College

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\* Thus, with hot indignation, did Carlyle reply to the theory that great men are the product of their time and only that: "I am well aware that in their days hero-worship, the thing I call hero-worship, professes to have gone out and finally ceased. This, for reasons which it will be worth while some time to inquire into, is an age that as it were denies the existence of great men; denies the desirability of great men. Show our critics a great man, a Luther, for example, they begin to what they call 'account' for him; not to worship him, but to take the dimensions of him and bring him out to be a little kind of man! He was the 'creature of the time,' they say; the time called him forth, the time did everything, he nothing—but whatever the little critic could have done, too! This seems to me but melancholy work. The time call forth? Alas, we have known times *call* loudly enough for their great man, but could not find him when he was called! He was not there; Providence had not sent him; the time *calling* its loudest, had to go down to confusion and wreck because he would not come when called.

"For if we will think of it, no time need have gone to ruin could it have found a man great enough, a man wise and good enough; wishing to discern truly what the times wanted, valor to lead it on the right road thither: these are the salvation of any time. But I liken common languid times, with their unbelief, distress, perplexity, with their languid doubting characters and embarrassed circumstances impotently crumbling—down into ever worse distress toward final ruin—all this I liken to dry, dead fuel, waiting for the lightning out of heaven that should kindle it. The great man, with his free force out of God's own hand, is the lightning. The dry, mouldering sticks are supposed to have called him forth! They are critics of small vision, I think, who cry: 'See is it not the sticks that make the fire?' No sadder proof can be given by a man of his own littleness than disbelief in great men."—Carlyle, *Heroes and Hero Worship*, Chapter 1, pp. 14-15.

have stood at the foot of the class, and it is not known that that environment has produced any more Beechers. Socrates was the product of the life and spirit of Athens; but Athens has long since given up the expectation of producing by wholesale and as the product of Athenian environment men of Socratic mind. Of each of these men we must say that Drinkwater says first of other great leaders and then of Lincoln, "He was the lord of his event."

But no great man can be understood entirely apart from his environment, and if he could, it would be unfair both to him and to his environment thus to attempt to interpret him.

Lincoln would have been a great man in almost any environment. But Gray is not the only man who has had occasion to moralize concerning the "mute inglorious Miltons" or the Cromwells guiltless of their country's blood, and guiltless of anything else good or bad enough to be mentioned, who lived and died in environments unsuited to their development.

#### IF LINCOLN HAD LIVED IN ANOTHER STATE.

Illinois has a right to remind herself of those elements in the character of Lincoln which were, we will not say produced or created, but developed, by his Illinois environment.

Lincoln was born in the very heart of Kentucky. It was the claim of the La Rue County when its representatives asked to be severed from Hardin and to become a separate county, that La Rue County, as measured from east to west, and from the northermost point in the State direct to the southern boundary, was the precise geographical center of the State. Its centrality gave rise to some semi-burlesque oratory at the time, and this probably suggested to Proctor Knott a portion of his noted speech which many years later did so much for Duluth, and relieved the solemn tedium of the United States House of Representatives with a hearty laugh.

It is conceivable that Lincoln might have lived and died in Kentucky. If so, it is not certain that he would have lived and died unknown. Men from his own county rose to distinction, and he might have done so. But it is certain that he would not there have lived in an environment such as evoked in him those qualities that made him President.

Indiana has its honorable place in the development of Lincoln. We cannot spare the record of those years of frontier life, nor of its proximity to that highway of traffic and thought, the Ohio River. Lincoln's life-long interest in river navigation was prompted by his experience in Indiana. His strong convictions on the slavery question were influenced in no unimportant degree by his voyage to New Orleans and his visit to the slave market. Even if we discount the statement of John Hanks that Lincoln then declared that if he had an opportunity to "hit that institution" he would hit it hard, we know from Lincoln himself that the sight of slaves, chained and sold, aroused in him emotions of enduring significance; and this we must credit in no small part to his life in Indiana.



## THE NOTABLE INFLUENCE OF A SHORT MIGRATION.

I have sometimes ventured to wonder what would have happened to the Lincoln family had Thomas Lincoln continued to live in the home on Nolin Creek where Abraham Lincoln was born until the time when the Lincoln family left Kentucky. He would not have sailed down the same stream. It might never have occurred to Thomas Lincoln to sail down the river at all, for the distance by Nolin Creek and Green River is several times as great.\* By crossing Muldraugh's Hill and living on Knob Creek he was within much shorter distance of the Ohio River, and he reached it by an entirely different route. Had he continued to live on the Nolin Creek farm, and had he taken his long voyage from there, he would have landed much farther down the Ohio, at a point where the confluence of the rivers had already caused considerable settlements to be made. It is quite possible that he might have floated on as far as the shores of Missouri before finding land as convenient and as remote from settlement as he found in Spencer County, Indiana.

If Lincoln had grown up in Hardin County, Kentucky, he might have received as good an education as he received in Spencer County, Indiana; have studied law and been admitted to the bar; have traveled the circuit and entered political life, and possibly have been elected to Congress. But it is hardly conceivable that Kentucky alone could have made him the man that he was when he left Illinois.

Had the Lincoln family remained in Spencer County, Indiana, Lincoln's most feasible avenue out into life was by way of the Ohio river. That might have given him valuable contacts with life farther south, and have widened his influence and made him a man of note in some southern State. But that would not have done for him what was done for him in Illinois.

Had the Lincoln family landed farther down the Ohio and made their home, as Daniel Boone did toward the end of his life, and as many other Kentuckians of Lincoln's day were doing, near the Mississippi river and within the borders of the State of Missouri, it is hardly possible that he would have found there the environment which would have made him what he became.

Social conditions in rural Kentucky, Missouri and southern Indiana were not notably different from those in the portion of Illinois where Lincoln made his home; but Lincoln found at New Salem and

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\* In response to my request, the Director of the United States Geological Survey furnishes me this information:

From Knob Creek by way of Rolling Fork and Salt River, the flat boat of Thomas Lincoln floated 42 miles to the Ohio, and then, assuming that he landed at the point in Spencer County nearest his farm, 91 miles down the Ohio to his debarkation near the mouth of Anderson River. Had he embarked on Nolin River, at its point nearest to the Lincoln cabin before the removal from Nolin to Knob Creek, he would have floated down Nolin and Green Rivers 256 miles to reach the Ohio, and would have been 46 miles, by the Ohio channel, below the mouth of Anderson River.

So far as I am aware, no one has considered the importance of this short removal from one sterile farm to another in the same county. I intend at some future time to work out more in detail the effects of the removal of the Lincoln family from Nolin Creek to Knob Creek. For the present it is enough to state that it appears to me that, while the distance was only about 15 miles, and within the same county, the effect upon the life of Lincoln was very great. Had the family remained upon Nolin Creek, they would not have been so likely to undertake a voyage of 256 miles to the Ohio; and had they done so, they would have been very likely not to locate till they reached Missouri.

at Springfield, and in the circuit of the Eighth Judicial District, something which he did not find, and to the same degree was not very likely to have found, in any other place where he had lived, or was likely to have lived, had he not removed to Illinois.

Remembering that wherever he lived he would have been an honest and influential man, and remembering further, that, in any environment which Thomas Lincoln would probably have chosen, conditions of his life would have possessed many elements in common with those which obtained in Illinois, we may move on from the realm of hypothesis and inquire what as a matter of fact Illinois did for Lincoln that assisted in the development of his latent greatness.

#### ILLINOIS STIMULATED LINCOLN'S LOVE OF LEARNING.

Lincoln found in Illinois conditions which powerfully stimulated his ambition to learn. He had received valuable instruction in Indiana. He had learned to read, and had developed a strong desire to read. He had read the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress*, a History of the United States, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Weems' Life of Washington* and the Statutes of Indiana. To this excellent list he had added a few other books which happened to be within reach, and so far as we know they were all remarkably good books. But he himself declared that "There was absolutely nothing to stimulate ambition to learn." He learned, not because his environment was favorable, but because he had within him the determination to learn.

In Illinois, Lincoln found himself in an environment which greatly encouraged his love of learning. New Salem may seem to the modern student a poor, squalid little village, no one of whose few houses cost much more than one hundred dollars. To Lincoln it was a city. It was not sufficiently metropolitan to make him feel like a stranger, but it had within it and passing through it men who greatly assisted in making Lincoln what he would not have been likely to become in Spencer County, Indiana. There he met Mentor Graham, the school-master. The "few chicken-tracks" which Lincoln was able to make on paper when he arrived became a clear, strong chirography. He had already written his "Chronicles of Ruben," and certain treatises on Temperance and on Cruelty to Animals; but the debating society of New Salem encouraged him to write on many great themes, and gave him an appreciative audience.

Oliver Wendell Holmes has reminded us that authors need a "mutual admiration society" in order to do their best work. Such a society, with its adjuncts of frank and robust criticism and free discussion, Lincoln found at New Salem.

There he studied Kirkham's Grammar under Mentor Graham. There he learned the rudiments of surveying. There he obtained his copy of Blackstone and read law. It was not simply that he found books in slightly larger number than had been available in Indiana; he found an atmosphere that encouraged him to make the largest possible use of books.



## A COLLEGE EDUCATION NOT IMPOSSIBLE.

At this time Lincoln may even have considered the possibility of a college education. Some of his associates at New Salem were students at Illinois College. Lincoln himself became possessed of a book of Greek exercises. He probably did not make large use of it; but the fact that he owned it shows us that he did not think it impossible that he might learn Greek. After his removal to Springfield he engaged in a short study of German. Ann Rutledge desired him to spend at least one year at Illinois College, while she attended its academy. I have often wondered whether a college course would have made or unmade Lincoln. It might not have done either, but it is an interesting question, and one which I hope sometime to give a conjectural answer, whether a college course, such as Lincoln might have obtained at Illinois College in Jacksonville, would have developed his mind and character more directly toward his success in life than did his years at New Salem. He could probably have emerged from Illinois College less deeply in debt than he was when he left New Salem. Financially and geographically a college course was not impossible. At present we will not ask whether it would have been better for him and the world had he taken it, but only remind ourselves that Lincoln in Illinois was so situated that a college course was one of the possibilities.

We cannot pursue the history of Lincoln's six years at New Salem intelligently and confine our study to the financial adventures of the firm of Lincoln and Berry, or the vicissitudes of Denton Offutt or of Lincoln's rough-and-tumble encounters with the Clary Grove boys. Lincoln was in an environment that gave him adequate mental stimulus and encouragement.

## ILLINOIS FAVORED LINCOLN'S POLITICAL AMBITION.

Lincoln found in Illinois conditions highly favorable to his ambition to become a political leader. He had hardly landed from the return voyage of the flat boat which had conveyed him to New Orleans than he announced himself a candidate for the Legislature. The outbreak of the Black Hawk War, if it interrupted for a few weeks his campaigning, brought him a popular election as captain, and did not diminish his political ambition or his prospect of success in that field.

Had Abraham Lincoln's flat boat stuck, not on Rutledge's dam, but let us say at the foot of Long Wharf, Boston, or at the Battery in New York, or in Mobile or New Orleans, and had he made any one of those cities his home, and there entered political life, he would not have found conditions as favorable either for his immediate entry, or for his prospective development, as he found in Illinois.

Illinois offered Lincoln an opportunity to enter politics almost the moment he crossed the State line. After a year spent as a day laborer in the vicinity of his father's home near Decatur, he made his second flat-boat journey to New Orleans, and by good fortune his boat stuck on the dam of Rutledge's mill at New Salem. Returning from New Orleans, in the Summer of 1831, he took up his home in that microscopic and short-lived village, and almost immediately proclaimed himself a candidate for the legislature.

Illinois politics up to this time had been local and factional. The State was a Democratic State; its southern part was settled very largely from Kentucky, and its northern portion as yet was almost uninhabited. National politics entered the State with the popularity of Andrew Jackson, and took a strong hold on the life and enthusiasm of the voters in 1840, when William Henry Harrison was a candidate, and the watchwords were "Log cabin and hard cider." It was not necessary for a candidate to have any large political program in 1832. Abraham Lincoln fitted well into his new environment. An unlettered backwoodsman, just off a flat boat, could poll a very respectable vote as a candidate for a member of the legislature in 1832, and could be elected two years thereafter, and re-elected regularly once in two years so long as he cared to announce himself a candidate. But Abraham Lincoln and Illinois politics were both developing through that period. Neither he nor the political situation remained unmodified. Illinois was not too proud to receive Abraham Lincoln as a member of her legislature in 1834, and was gratified and honored to have a share in electing him President in 1860. Illinois furnished a part of the necessary environment for the political development of Lincoln.

We know the political character of Illinois at the time when Lincoln became a resident of the State. It was Democratic, and its Democracy was divided between the "whole-hog" Democrats and those whose devotion to Andrew Jackson carried them to less violent extremes. Lincoln's personal backgrounds were those of Jacksonian Democracy. Thomas Lincoln was a Jackson Democrat; John Hanks, as late as 1860, was "an old Democrat who will vote for Lincoln." Persons who heard what is believed to have been Lincoln's first stump speech at Decatur in the summer of 1830 say that he was then for Jackson and internal improvements. I have not found the personal recollections of those who profess to have heard this speech very clear or consistent, but they may be correct. Andrew Jackson was a name to capture the imagination, and he may at that time have been Lincoln's hero personally if not politically. Lamon holds that Lincoln at the outset was "a nominal Jackson man." He says on the authority of Dennis Hanks that Lincoln was "Whiggish but not a Whig." (Lamon: *Life of Lincoln*, 123, 126.)

From the time of his first candidacy, however, there is nothing that identifies Lincoln with Jackson Democracy. His earliest announcement of himself as a candidate for the legislature did not name the party with which he was affiliated, and he was warmly supported by local Democrats as well as Whigs. But as soon as he began to express any principles which could be aligned with national issues, they were unqualifiedly those of the Whigs. He may have continued to admire Andrew Jackson, but he became immediately a disciple of Henry Clay. (See Nicolay and Hay, 1: 102, 103; Morse, 1: 38.)

In this development his personal evolution was like that of the State. But Lincoln's own development was in advance of that of the State as a whole, and qualified him to lead in a movement that in time committed Illinois against the policy of the extension of slavery.

## THE INCIDENTAL VALUES OF POLITICAL MISTAKES.

It would perhaps be but fair to add that the standards which obtained in Illinois politics were the more favorable to the advancement of Lincoln because the mistakes of politicians in his day, in which mistakes Lincoln participated, were so largely the mistakes of the whole body of the people and of Lincoln's constituents, that a public official was not too summarily condemned to oblivion for his errors of judgment. Governor Ford comments on this matter with characteristic severity, condemning the "Long Nine" whose log-rolling in connection with the removal of the Capital from Vandalia to Springfield cost the State, as he maintained, more than the value of all the real estate in the vicinity of Springfield, and he records the names of those members of the House of Representatives who voted for the disastrous "Internal improvement system." He was especially indignant when he considered how many of these men, who, as he believed, ought to have been repudiated by the people, were continued in office. Ninian W. Edwards and others were "since often elected or appointed to other offices, and are yet all of them popular men. . . . Dement has been twice appointed Receiver of Public Moneys. . . . Shields to be Auditor, Judge of the Supreme Court, Commissioner of the General Land Office, and Brigadier General in the Mexican War. . . . Lincoln was several times elected to the Legislature and finally to Congress; and Douglas, Smith and McClernand have been three times elected to Congress, and Douglas to the United States Senate. Being all of them spared monuments of popular wrath, evincing how safe it is to be a politician, and how disastrous it may be to the country to keep along with the present fervor of the people."—*History of Illinois*, pp. 195, 196.

We need not claim for Lincoln in these matters wisdom superior to that of his associates, but may remind ourselves that his errors of judgment were not only shared by his associates in office, but that their errors did not prevent his repeated re-election, much to the disgust of Governor Ford, who counted him one of the "spared monuments of popular wrath."

The historian of the future is certain to set enhanced value upon Governor Ford's *History of Illinois*. The future student is not likely to condemn with less severity than Governor Ford either the log-rolling of early Illinois politics or the folly of the financial methods by which it was undertaken to support the State banks and the Internal Improvement system which ended with the financial crash of 1837. In the main Governor Ford was right. But Governor Ford lacked perspective. He was not strictly accurate in describing Lincoln and his associates as "spared monuments of popular wrath." There ought to have been more wrath than there was. The men who were responsible for those measures in the Legislature fairly represented the will and the wisdom or unwisdom of their constituents. The law-makers and the men who elected them to make laws were involved in the same attempts to create values out of things that had no value. The long list which Governor Ford gives us of men who were responsible for the financial

evils of their time and who nevertheless were thereafter elected and re-elected to office is its own answer. These men were as wise as their constituents, and not much wiser. Illinois had to learn from bitter experience, and Lincoln was one of the men who had his share in the education which the whole State was compelled to undergo.

#### LAKE AND RIVER TRANSPORTATION.

Lincoln became a factor in Illinois life just at the time when the question of transportation was becoming most acute. Whatever surplus Illinois produced in the early days, was floated down the Mississippi, whose commercial outlet was New Orleans; but there were other agricultural states tributary to the Mississippi, and the wharves of New Orleans were piled high in time with unmarketable produce. It was less easy to float goods upstream than down, and New Orleans was not a manufacturing city. The goods which Illinois required for her own use were largely produced in Philadelphia or New York. The accounts and bills payable of Illinois merchants tended to accumulate in New York; the credits were in New Orleans. The money in circulation was largely issued by wildcat banks, and afforded no suitable basis of exchange. If this situation went on permanently, Illinois could have no great commercial future. Her banking was principally done in St. Louis. In 1831, for the first time, goods were imported from the East to St. Louis by way of Chicago at one third less cost than by New Orleans. That fact did more than we can now imagine to compel the unification of Illinois. Lake Michigan became a necessity to Menard and Sangamon Counties, as certainly as to Cook County and the northern end of the State. We remember the disastrous experiments in public improvements by means of which creeks were to have become rivers and canals were to have connected the heads of navigation through the State. Let us not forget that these conditions with all their blundering and bankruptcy were potent in making Illinois a commercial unit and in securing her a place of influence in the commercial life of the nation.

#### ILLINOIS AND THE UNIFICATION OF THE NATION.

The relation of Illinois to the unification of the nation was no accident. Governor Thomas Ford died in 1850, leaving the manuscript of his History of Illinois to be published after his decease. In that work he clearly set forth the aim of Hon. Nathaniel Pope, delegate in Congress from the Territory of Illinois, when, in January, 1818, he on his own responsibility amended the proposal for the admission of Illinois to the Union by moving her boundary north from the southern extremity of Lake Michigan to the line of 42° 30' so as to include within the State fourteen additional counties and the port of Chicago. Governor Ford said:

"It was known that in all confederated republics there was danger of dissolution . . . . Illinois had a coast of 150 miles on the Ohio river, and nearly as much on the Wabash; the Mississippi was its western boundary for the whole length of the State; the commerce of all the western country was to pass by its shores, and would necessarily



come to a focus at the mouth of the Ohio, at a point within this State, and within the control of Illinois, if, the Union being dissolved, she should see proper to control it. It was foreseen that none of the great States in the West could venture to aid in dissolving the Union, without cultivating a State situate in such a central and commanding position. What then was the duty of the national government? Illinois was certain to be a great State with any boundaries which that government could give. . . . If left entirely upon the waters of these great rivers, it was plain that, in case of threatened disruption, the interest of the new State would be to join a southern and western confederacy. But if a large portion of it could be made dependent upon the commerce and navigation of the great northern lakes, connected as they are with the eastern States, a rival interest would be created, to check the wish for a western and southern confederacy. It therefore became the duty of the national government, not only to make Illinois strong, but to raise an interest inclining and binding her to the eastern and northern portions of the Union. This could be done only through an interest in the lakes. At that time the commerce on the lakes was small, but its increase was confidently expected, and indeed it has exceeded all expectations and is still in its infancy. To accomplish this object effectually, it was not only necessary to give to Illinois the port of Chicago, and a route for the canal, but a considerable coast on Lake Michigan, with a country back of it sufficiently extensive to contain a population capable of exercising a decided influence upon the councils of the State."—Ford's *History of Illinois*, 22-23.

If Governor Ford had written these words after the Civil War, we might have suspected him of attributing to Judge Pope more of political foresight than either he or Judge Pope really possessed. But he wrote before 1850, and we have no reason to doubt that this remarkably clear view of the influence of Illinois as a State that might bind together the expanding Union was really possessed by Judge Pope when he secured for the new State her fourteen additional counties, including the port of Chicago, and keenly appreciated by Governor Ford in his stern opposition\* to the proposals of Wisconsin that the northern counties of Illinois should be restored to the newer State.

#### THE COURTS OF ILLINOIS DEVELOPED LINCOLN.

Illinois offered to Lincoln through her Circuit Courts an opportunity of widening his acquaintance and influence and also of meeting in political and legal relations a circle of men admirably suited to his intellectual development. The lawyers of early Illinois represented widely divergent types. There were frontier shysters of small ability

\* The fight of Wisconsin was very strong in Ford's administration. Not only so, but the northern counties of Illinois were inclined to think they had more in common with Wisconsin than with Egypt. There was more than one petition from the counties themselves or from some party within their asking that they be severed from Illinois and joined to the State to the north. Governor Ford's argument in refutation of the claim of Wisconsin is given in *extenso* in his *History* and is a document of permanent interest.

A proposal to separate northern Illinois from southern Illinois is at this moment pending before the General Assembly. Those who propose such a sundering of what God hath joined will find instructive reading in some of the early literature of this State.

and less legal learning, but there also were men of large native ability, whose wits were sharpened by much experience. Lincoln's practice soon brought him before the Supreme Court of Illinois, where he had to plead before judges of learning and high standing. The courts of Illinois were not essentially different from those of Indiana and Missouri in the same period. Any of the frontier States then rapidly filling could have furnished him an arena for his legal skill; but the skill which Lincoln developed and the acquaintance which he formed in Illinois had their relation to a political situation which no other State could quite have duplicated. Mr. Arnold relates an interesting incident which occurred after Mr. Lincoln was elected President. He was asked to appoint a man named Butterfield to a position in the Army. This man Butterfield was the son of Justin Butterfield, who in 1849 had secured an appointment to the Land Office, a position greatly desired by Lincoln at the close of his term in Congress. Arnold says:

When the application was presented, the President paused, and after a moment's silence, said: "Mr. Justin Butterfield once obtained an appointment I very much wanted, and in which my friends believed I could have been useful, and to which they thought I was fairly entitled, and I have hardly ever felt so bad at any failure in my life; but I am glad of an opportunity of doing a service to his son." And he made an order for his commission. He then spoke of the offer made to him of the governorship of Oregon. To which the reply was made: "How fortunate that you declined. If you had gone to Oregon, you might have come back as Senator, but you never would have been President."—*Life of Abraham Lincoln*, 81.

Lincoln assented to the foregoing and said he had always been a fatalist, believing with Hamlet in the Divinity that shapes our ends.

Oregon could have made Lincoln a Senator, but it is not certain that any other State than Illinois could have made him President. He needed essentially the conditions which he found in Illinois to develop the qualities which were inherent in him; and he needed a political situation such as existed in Illinois to make him at the opportune time the President of the United States. We can never be too certain concerning the negative implications of a study like this. We can never be quite sure what another State might have done. We are quite certain that no other State, then in the Union, could have furnished all the conditions which Illinois supplied and which were so important both in the evolution of Lincoln and in his elevation.

### ILLINOIS THE NATIONAL KEYSTONE

Pennsylvania is proud of her soubriquet, "the Keystone state." Had that name not been pre-empted when the Union formed a smaller arch, it should have been reserved for Illinois. Both the shape and geographical position of Illinois entitle her to that designation. Her superficial area extends from the lakes to the confluence of the great rivers, and hence virtually from the northern boundary of the nation to Mason and Dixon's Line. In the beginning it shared with Kentucky and Missouri the status of a southern State, but Lincoln saw and had some reason to fear the development of its northern and larger portion. It was an ominous sign for Lincoln when he who had done so much for the election of Zachary Taylor as President, was set aside

in his application for the Land Office and that position was given to Mr. Justin Butterfield of Chicago.\* Lincoln had good reason to fear the growth of Chicago and of northern Illinois. As late as the State Convention of the Republican party at Decatur in 1860, the northern part of Illinois was for Seward. Not even the sight of John Hanks' two fence rails wholly convinced the politicians of the Chicago area that Lincoln was the right man for President. His solidifying of his own State was an important step toward the solidifying of the nation.

#### THE RIVER AND HARBOR CONVENTION.

So far as I am aware no biographer of Lincoln has ever heard of the River and Harbor Convention of 1847. I do not find it mentioned by Nicolay and Hay, by Arnold, by Morse, by Miss Tarbell, or by any other biographer of Lincoln. But it was that which first brought Lincoln to Chicago. The Chicago papers, truthful then as always, stated that this was the first visit of the Honorable Abraham Lincoln to the "commercial emporium of the State."\* He was more welcome than he might have been at some earlier periods in his career. In the first place he was the only Whig member of Congress from Illinois, was just elected and had not yet taken his seat. In the second place he was thoroughly committed to the policy of developing inland waters and of connecting the lakes with the rivers. It will some time become the duty of the historian to show what that convention did for Abraham Lincoln. The presiding officer of that convention was Edward Bates of Missouri. Lincoln probably did not know it at the time, but then and there he probably formed the impression which later made Bates a member of his Cabinet. It was there that Lincoln first heard Horace Greeley, and Greeley heard Lincoln in a short and tactful speech. Greeley did not know it, but he was forming an impression of Lincoln, which thirteen years later was to influence his judgment in accepting Lincoln as the compromise candidate who could not only defeat Seward in the Convention, but defeat the Democratic nominee in the election following. What Lincoln came to learn of the qualities essential to unifying his own State went far toward making him capable of unifying the nation.

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\* Justin Butterfield was born in Keene, N. H., in 1790. He studied at Williams College, and was admitted to the bar at Watertown, N. Y., in 1812. After some years of practice in New York state he removed to New Orleans, and in 1835 to Chicago. He soon attained high rank in his profession. In 1841 he was appointed by President Harrison United States District Attorney. In 1849 he was appointed by President Taylor Commissioner of the General Land Office. He was logical and resourceful, and many stories are told of his quick wit. He died October 25, 1835.

Mr. Butterfield probably owed his appointment over Mr. Lincoln to the influence of Daniel Webster, who was his personal friend, and also to the growing importance of the northern portion of the State of Illinois. Taylor was, according to his own pre-election statement, "a Whig, but not an ultra-Whig." The Whig interests in Illinois could better afford to overlook the claims of a down-state ex-congressman than those of a strongly backed representative from the Whig end of the State.

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\* "Abraham Lincoln, the only Whig representative to Congress from this State, we are happy to see in attendance upon the Convention. This is his first visit to the commercial emporium of the State, and we have no doubt his first visit will impress him more deeply, if possible, with the importance, and inspire a higher zeal for the great interest of river-and-harbor improvements. We expect much from him as an representative in Congress, and we have no doubt our expectations will be more than realized, for never was reliance placed in a nobler heart and a sounder judgment. We know the banner he bears will never be soiled."—*Chicago Journal*, July 6, 1847.



The *Chicago Journal* in an indignant editorial inquired whether of the River and Harbor bill, on August 3, 1846, by President James K. Polk, that bill had contained appropriations of \$15,000 for the Harbor of Buffalo, \$20,000 for Cleveland, \$40,000 for the St. Clair flats, \$80,000 for Milwaukee, Racine, Chicago and other nearby ports, and sums for other lake harbors. President Polk affirmed that "these ports were not harbors of vessels used in international trade, "It would seem the dictate of wisdom under such circumstances to husband our means, and not waste them on comparatively unimportant objects."

The *Chicago Journal* in an indignant editorial inquired whether this same James K. Polk was not squandering millions upon an invasion of Mexico for the sake of the extension of slavery? Was he not buying steamboats at exorbitant prices for use in the transportation of troops and supplies to Mexico, and leaving our legitimate commerce on the lakes unprotected, with lives liable to be lost for lack of safe harbors, and great territory of our own undeveloped while he sought to acquire other territory by bloody means and for ignoble ends? What an insult to the intelligence of the nation for him to declare that these lake harbors were "comparatively unimportant objects!"

A great convention assembled in Chicago on July 5, 1847, to protest against James K. Polk and all his works, to advance the interests of the lake harbors, and incidentally to promote the welfare of the Whig party. The significance of that convention has never been adequately understood.\*

The attendance upon the River and Harbor Convention was not limited to residents of lake cities. There were seven delegates from Connecticut, one from Florida, two from Georgia, twelve from Iowa, two from Kentucky, two from Maine, twenty-eight from Massachusetts, forty-five from Missouri, two from New Hampshire, eight from New Jersey, twenty-seven from Pennsylvania, three from Rhode Island, one from South Carolina. I have not tried to count the long lists from New York, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin. These are all located by counties, and show a widespread representation from all parts of these States. The Convention was felt to be of vast economic interest, and was by no means lacking in political importance. Theoretically it was assembled for the consideration of internal improvements; but in addition to this it was convened for the sake of opposing James K. Polk and all his political associations.

Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Thomas H. Benton, Lewis Cass and other national leaders all were invited, and responded in letters, that of Webster especially being a document of considerable size and importance. Anson Burlingame headed the Massachusetts delegation, and Ohio followed the lead of Thomas Corwin.

Horace Greeley was there, and he wrote up the convention for the *New York Tribune*, and ever afterward advised young men to "Go West, and grow up with the country." Thurlow Weed reported

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\* I am indebted to Mr. James Shaw, of Aurora, for first calling my attention to the significance of this convention.

it in full for the *Albany Journal*, and gave an interesting account of his own journey around the lakes on "the magnificent steamer, *Empire*."

The political aspects of the convention are suggested by the fact that Lewis Cass of Michigan, which State might have benefited by river and harbor improvements, remained away and sent a very distant note of regret, while Daniel Webster, from Massachusetts, in a long letter read at the convention, came out unqualifiedly for all that the convention stood for. Cass wanted to be President, and greatly needed the vote of the slave States: Webster's position was, of course, that of a politician who greatly desired to link the political and economic future of the new States with the North and East.

David Dudley Field was present to speak for the administration. He did it with shrewdness; Greeley gives the gist of his address. The convention did not treat him any too courteously; and Lincoln followed with his one speech, a tactful one, of which we have no report, but one that appears to have stood for fair play while being ardently in favor of the whole plan of internal improvements. The convention at its next session apologized to Mr. Field for the uncivil treatment he had received, but did not alter its program or change its convictions on account of this apology for bad manners.

\* The River and Harbor Convention of 1847 put Chicago upon the nation's map. It did more than any previous or subsequent assembly to link the fortunes of the great State of Illinois with the North and East.

It must have been a very illuminating event to Lincoln. It was his first visit to Chicago, his first view of the great lakes.\* It was his first important reminder that, while he was elected from Central Illinois, he, as the only Whig member of Congress from the State, must find his political support thereafter largely in the newer portion of the State where the Whigs were more largely in control. It must have reminded him, and he was soon to be rudely reminded again, that Chicago, and Northern Illinois with her, was thenceforth to be reckoned with as an important political as well as economic factor. He had hoped to effect the unity of Illinois by a canal connecting the lakes with the rivers; whether this ever was accomplished or not, the whole future of Illinois, central and southern as well as northern, was tied up with Chicago, and through Chicago with the East and North. Illinois, with her whole western boundary washed by the Mississippi, her southern border hemmed in by the Ohio, and a large part of her eastern border determined by the Wabash, and all of these streams bearing their cargoes through slave territory to New Orleans, was an indivisible political and economic unit, bound by Chicago and the great lakes to New York and New England, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

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\* My good friends, Mr. J. Seymour Currey, of Evanston, and Prof. Julius E. Olson, of the State University of Wisconsin, are of opinion that Lincoln made two earlier visits to Chicago; and they may be correct. To me, however, the evidence does not appear entirely conclusive; and in any event, those earlier visits, if they occurred, were without important significance. Prof. Olson's interesting study is published by the Wisconsin Historical Society, Vol. 4, p. 44, 1920, and Mr. Currey's suggestive article is in the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, Vol. 12, No. 3, Oct., 1919, p. 412.

## ILLINOIS AND SLAVERY.

In 1802, one year before the birth of Lincoln, the slave trade ceased by constitutional limitation. If slavery itself could have gone out with the importation of slaves, the history of Lincoln and his nation had been quite otherwise. It was not so, and in 1820 came the Missouri Compromise. By this act Missouri was admitted to the Union as a slave State, and slavery which before that time had been held south of Mason and Dixon's line was extended far north on the west side of the Mississippi river; but by the agreement then entered upon, States thereafter to be admitted into the Union were to come in free unless they lay south of the parallel of 36 degrees and 30 minutes north longitude, the southern boundary of Missouri. For thirty-four years that Compromise had stood, but thirty-four years is a long time, and slavery had been gaining ground. The Louisiana purchase had brought in material for a number of new slave states and the Mexican War had brought in others. California had indeed entered the Union as a free State, but that was not the fault of the slaveholding element in Congress or even of the then occupant of the White House.

The removal of the Capital of the United States from Washington and later from Philadelphia to a small district taken from and bounded by the two slave States of Maryland and Virginia did much to strengthen slavery socially and politically. In 1854 the Kansas-Nebraska Bill repealed the Missouri Compromise, started Kansas in bleeding, set John Brown's soul and body to marching in the path that led to the gallows, and called Abraham Lincoln back into politics from which he had retired in 1848.

Abraham Lincoln could not remember the time when he had not believed slavery to be wrong, but he found no occasion in his early political life to make slavery a direct issue. It was well for him and the nation that his home was in a State where he had to define his own position on the slavery question in terms both ethical and legal.

Illinois as a part of the Northwest Territory was forever dedicated as a shrine of freedom; but Illinois as a State settled from Kentucky permitted a good many slaves to be held by families who moved into the State and brought their negroes with them. Illinois had a "Black Code" of disgraceful and revolting severity. On March 3, 1837, Abraham Lincoln and Dan Stone, representatives from the County of Sangamon, filed their protest against resolutions adopted on the preceding day by their fellow members of the House of Representatives, violently denouncing abolitionists and expressing strong pro-slavery sympathies. This protest of Lincoln and Stone stated that its two signers, "believe that the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy." In 1841 the sale of a negro girl named Nancy, resulted in the case of *Bailey vs. Cromwell*, which was carried to the Supreme Court of Illinois. There Lincoln contended that this slave girl was free by virtue of the Ordinance of 1787, which prohibited slavery in the Northwest Territory. This case which Lincoln argued

when he was thirty-two years of age, compelled him to consider slavery both in its legal and its moral aspects. Such an issue could hardly have risen, except in Illinois or Indiana or Ohio.\*

### THE REPEAL OF THE MISSOURI COMPROMISE.

The leader in the repeal of the Missouri Compromise was Stephen Arnold Douglas, Senator from Illinois, and at that time chairman of the Senate Committee on Territories. Whether he was the real author of the measure is hotly disputed. The most careful study of this question seems to me to be that of Prof. P. Orman Ray, who, after a careful analysis of the material available, supports the view of Colonel John A. Parker, in his pamphlet, "The Secret History of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill", and derives the movement for the repeal to the factional strife in Missouri between Thomas Hart Benton and David R. Atchison. Atchison, as Professor Ray believes, was the real author of the measure; and his conclusions appear to me to be valid. (See *The Repeal of the Missouri Compromise*, by P. Orman Ray, Ph.D., Cleveland, 1909). He shows that much has been written about the part which Douglas took, and of his motive in the matter, is not sustained by adequate evidence, and that some things which Douglas claimed, as, for instance, that for eight years prior to the repeal, he had steadily advocated it, appear to be unreliable. But conceding, as we may well concede, the authorship of the repeal to David R. Atchison, and perhaps also in part to Judge William C. Price, it is Douglas with whom we have to reckon as the man responsible for the form of its presentation, for its report from the Committee, and for its adoption by Congress and discussion by the country, and Douglas was proud to be known as its responsible author.

And, whatever Douglas' motive at the outset, or even if he had then no motive except that of the possibility of being removed from the chairmanship of the Committee on Territories, to make way for Atchison to introduce the bill, he must ultimately have seen that he was certain to be held responsible for it, and it was well for him, if he expected to be a candidate for the Presidency, to use to his advantage in the Southern States what was certain to be used to his disadvantage in the States where a strong anti-slavery sentiment existed.

Beyond any reasonable doubt Douglas hoped to gain sufficient political influence in the slave-holding states to make him President. In the two sketches of Lincoln's life which he himself prepared, Abraham Lincoln stated that after his return from Congress in 1848, he returned to the practice of law with more ardor than he ever had manifested before, but that the Missouri Compromise recalled him to political activity. When Abraham Lincoln found himself recalled to political life by a great moral crisis in the life of the nation, it was the good fortune of Illinois to be able to furnish to Abraham Lincoln a foe man worthy of his steel. He did not have to go out of his own State to meet the national issue. Illinois furnished him an arena of

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\* Theoretically, such a case might have risen in any one of the five States carved out of the Northwest Territory, but it would not have been likely to rise in Wisconsin or Michigan, because they were newer and more remote from slave territory.



national proportions. He did not need to go to Missouri or to bleeding Kansas, though he paid an important visit to the latter; he was able to beard the slavery lion in his political den in his own State and the State of Douglas.

#### AN ILLINOIS FOEMAN WORTHY OF LINCOLN'S STEEL.

Who can measure the influence upon Lincoln of the fact that Stephen A. Douglas was in 1854 and still in 1858 not only a resident of Illinois but a dominant force in national politics? The joint debate between these two great men stands out in our national life and occupies a place all its own. The significant fact of our present purpose is that this contest found both of its notable participants in this State and the State itself on tiptoe eager for the contest between them.

Both Lincoln and Douglas knew that Illinois was not a unit, and each of them used that fact to the utmost to the disadvantage of the other. Douglas repeatedly charged Lincoln with uttering sentiments in Northern Illinois which he would not dare to repeat in Egypt; and Lincoln succeeded in committing Douglas to the "Freeport heresy" which ultimately proved his undoing.

But Lincoln forced the issue on this platform, that while the Constitution recognized slavery as existing, and he had no plan or purpose to interfere with it where it then was, the framers of the Constitution had clearly understood that slavery was an evil, and it was a thing to be faced as such. At Galesburg, Lincoln quoted Douglas as saying that Douglas did not care whether slavery was voted up or voted down; and he proceeded:

"Judge Douglas declares that if any community wants slavery, they have a right to it. He can say that logically, if he says there is no wrong in slavery; but if you admit that there is a wrong in it, he cannot logically say that anybody has a right to do wrong. He insists that, upon the score of equality, the owners of slaves and the owners of property—or horses and every other kind of property—should be alike, and hold them alike in a new territory. That is perfectly logical if the two species of property are alike and equally founded in right. But if you admit that one of them is wrong, you cannot institute any equality between right and wrong.

"Now, I confess myself as belonging to that class in the country who regard slavery as a moral, social and political evil having due regard for its actual existence among us and the difficulties of getting rid of it in any satisfactory way, and to all the constitutional obligations which have been thrown about it; but, nevertheless, desire a policy which looks to the prevention of it as a wrong, and look hopefully to the time when as a wrong it may come to an end. He is blowing out the moral lights around us when he contends that whoever wants slaves has a right to hold them."

It was thus that Lincoln came to his position, not as an abolitionist, but as one who could say what Lincoln did say with great deliberation at Springfield on June 17, 1858:

"'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect that it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the states, old as well as new, north as well as south."

How carefully Lincoln had prepared this paragraph and its context is shown by the fact that when Douglas made quotations from it a few months later, Lincoln was able to repeat it word for word, saying as he did so, that Douglas had repeated it so often that Lincoln had learned it from him. That, of course, was only an excuse for knowing it so well that he could repeat it months after the occasion for which it had been prepared. The fact is, that when Lincoln went before the convention which on June 17, 1858, nominated him as a candidate against Douglas for Senator, Lincoln had determined to force the slavery issue upon moral grounds, indicated by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise; and the man with whom he had to discuss that issue was not John C. Calhoun of North Carolina or any other statesman from the Southern States, but Stephen A. Douglas, of Illinois.

#### THE SLAVERY ISSUE NATIONAL AND MORAL.

Considered in their intellectual aspects, it is hard to decide which to admire the more, the speeches of Lincoln or those of Douglas. But what we are to remember is that Lincoln deliberately forced the consideration of slavery in its ethical aspects. Douglas set forth strongly his claim for "squatter sovereignty." He maintained that the founders of the republic never intended that there should be uniformity in matters of local concern, but that there should be large liberty in each State to decide its own policy in matters within its own boundaries. The slavery issue thus was an issue for each State to determine in its own way. He insisted that to hold this principle was not to commit one's self to the pro-slavery view; he did not care, so far as this principle was concerned, whether slavery was voted up or voted down, but he did care for the sacred right of each State to work out its own salvation in matters of its own concern.

But what Lincoln said at the outset, he reiterated in nearly every speech, and stated thus in the debate at Quincy:

"The difference of opinion, reduced to its lowest terms, is no other than the difference between the men who think slavery a wrong, and those who do not think it a wrong. 'The Republican party think it wrong; we think it is a moral, a social, a political wrong. We think it a wrong not confining itself to the persons or the states where it exists, but that it is a wrong in its tendency, to say the least, that extends itself to the existence of the whole nation. Because we think it wrong, we propose a course of policy that shall deal with it as a wrong. We deal with it as with any other wrong, in so far as we can prevent its growing any larger, and so deal with it that in the run of time there may be some promise of an end to it. We have a due regard to the actual presence of it amongst us, and the difficulties of getting rid of it in any satisfactory way, and all the constitutional obligations thrown about it.'"

It was no political accident that drove Lincoln to this position. The Kansas-Nebraska bill and the Dred Scot decision had practically nationalized slavery. This he affirmed in his speech in Springfield, June 17, 1858, and in that speech declared that a house divided against itself could not stand. He knew what answer Senator Douglas would make. There was nothing in the Chicago speech of Douglas on July

9, 1858, that surprised him, and Lincoln was present and heard it. Douglas quoted Lincoln's "house divided against itself" paragraph, and commented.

"In other words, Mr. Lincoln asserts, as a fundamental principle of this government, that there must be uniformity in the local laws and domestic institutions of each and all the states of the Union.

"Now, my friends, I must say to you frankly, that I take hold, unqualified issue with him upon that principle. I assert that it is neither desirable nor possible that there should be uniformity in the local institutions and domestic regulations of the different states of the Union. The framers of our government never contemplated uniformity in its internal concerns. Mr. Lincoln has totally misapprehended the great principles upon which our government rests."

Lincoln did not misapprehend. He knew just what he was doing, and he knew why he was doing it. He was determined to force the fight with Douglas on these two grounds, that the slavery issue was national, and that it was fundamentally moral.

Illinois is not the only State in which Lincoln might have formulated or forced that issue; but Illinois was the State in which, above all other States, that issue could be squarely joined between himself and the advocate of "squatter sovereignty," Stephen A. Douglas. The event made Douglas a Senator again, and two years later it made Lincoln President.

#### ILLINOIS THE FORUM FOR LINCOLN'S GREATEST SPEECHES.

Illinois offered to Lincoln a forum for the delivery of very nearly all his greatest speeches up to the time of his departure for his Inaugural. If we except only the Cooper Union address, virtually all the other of Lincoln's outstanding speeches were delivered in his own State, and it was the best possible place for their delivery. The "House-divided-against-itself" speech has already been referred to. His "Lost Speech" at Bloomington, May 20, 1856, could not so well have been delivered in any other State convention. His Peoria speech of October 16, 1854, might have been ignored if delivered in another State, but in Illinois, it virtually made certain the contest four years later with Douglas.

#### ILLINOIS GAVE LINCOLN MOST OF HIS OFFICES.

Illinois gave to Lincoln every office that he ever held, except that of the Presidency and the postmastership of New Salem. Even in those important positions Illinois exerted an influence far from negligible. When he was a candidate for the Presidency he recorded in a sketch of his life written with his own hand that his election as captain of his company in the Black Hawk war gave him at the time more satisfaction than any subsequent honor. He also recorded that his defeat in 1832 when he was a candidate for the Legislature was the only defeat he ever suffered at the hands of the people. The people who thus voted for him whenever they had opportunity were, down to 1860, wholly Illinois people. Even in the election of 1832 when he was defeated, that part of Illinois that knew him, the part



adjacent to and inclusive of New Salem, voted overwhelmingly in his favor. A Legislature declined in 1858 to make him Senator; a President in 1848 declined to make him Land Commissioner, but the people of Illinois gave him every office which he ever asked of them.

#### ILLINOIS FENCE RAILS AND THEIR VARIOUS USES.

Illinois did something for Lincoln worth remembering in preserving some of his fence-rails, and the memory of his making them. He made them in 1830, and the State Republican Convention of 1860 was held in Decatur, only ten miles away from where those rails still formed some part of a fence. Thither came Lincoln, to attend the convention that on May 9 and 10, 1860, was to elect delegates to the National Republican Convention, to be held in Chicago, scarcely a week later, May 16. The northern part of the State was still strongly for Seward, though the *Chicago Tribune* had already come out squarely for Lincoln. But the Decatur Convention was not long divided. Richard J. Oglesby and old John Hanks had found two of the old rails, and at the opportune moment they were brought into the Convention, with a reminder that Lincoln was "the rail candidate." So he proved to be; and the Seward boom fell flat in Illinois. From Decatur the Lincoln hosts went almost directly to Chicago, carrying with them the fresh enthusiasm of their Decatur experience.

#### ILLINOIS THE SCENE OF THE CONVENTION THAT NOMINATED LINCOLN.

Finally, Illinois offered to Lincoln a place for the National Republican convention of 1860. In the boisterous young city by the lake, within the borders of the very State where Lincoln had split his rails, convened the delegates from all the States where there was organized opposition to the extension of slavery. We do not know what would have happened if the Republican Convention had been held in some other city where as many men were shouting for Seward as in Chicago were shouting for Lincoln. We do know that the galleries were potent then and even now not wholly lacking in their power to influence a body of delegates. It was Lincoln's own State that furnished the theater for that dramatic act which made him President of the nation.

But the theater was not the whole play. Illinois was geographically and politically even then a State whose support was of vast importance to the ticket of the new political party. Illinois did not dictate the nomination; that was done by the opponents of Seward, after failure to discover another candidate who could carry the convention with good prospect also of carrying the election; but the influence of Illinois in both these matters was important; and Illinois was by that time united in support of Lincoln. And, when all else has been said, it is not to be forgotten that Illinois furnished a large fraction of the shouting.

#### LINCOLN'S FAREWELL AND RETURN TO ILLINOIS.

The time came for him to say farewell to his own Illinois. He said it first to his aged step-mother, who remembered with loving heart how he had been dear to her as her own son, and had never

spoken to her an unkind word. He said it to his old neighbors, as he stood on the rear platform of the train with the wet eyes asking them to commend him to God in their prayers. And then he went away.

He came not back, save only the sacred memory of him, and the holy pride with which he was held to lasting honor, and the dust that once had enshrined his great soul. Thus wrote Walt Whitman in the spring of 1865:

"When lilacs last in the door-yard bloomed,  
And the great star early drooped in the western sky in the night,  
I mourned, and yet shall mourn with ever returning spring.

O ever-returning spring! trinity sure to me you bring;  
Lilacs blooming perennial, and drooping star in the west,  
And thought of him I love.

Over the breast of the spring, the land amid cities,  
Amid lanes and through old woods (where lately the violets peeped from  
the ground, spotting the gray debris;)   
Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes—passing the endless  
grass;  
Passing the yellow-speared wheat, every grain from its shroud in the  
dark-brown fields uprising;  
Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in the orchards;  
Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,  
Night and day journeys a coffin.

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,  
Through day and night, with the great cloud darkening the land,  
With the pomp of the inlooped flags, with the cities draped in black,  
With the show of the States themselves, as of crape-velled women  
standing,  
With processions long and winding, and the flambeaus of the night,  
With the countless torches lit—with the silent sea of faces and the un-  
bared heads,  
With the waiting depot, the arriving coffin, and the somber faces,  
With dirges through the night, with the thousand voices rising strong  
and solemn;  
With all the mournful voices of the dirges, poured around the coffin,  
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organ—where amid these you  
journey,  
With the tolling, tolling, bells' perpetual clang:  
Here! Coffin that slowly passes,  
I give you my sprig of lilacs!"

The long journey ended. The lilacs bloomed and drooped. The gates of Oak Ridge opened and closed. Abraham Lincoln was at home again, in his own Illinois.\*

As the body of Lincoln returned to the soil of his own State, Edna Dean Proctor, then a young woman, wrote a noble poem, a copy of which in her own handwriting hangs in the tomb of Lincoln, from which I quote a few lines:

\*Abraham Lincoln was assassinated on Good Friday night, April 14, 1865, and died the following morning. His funeral was held from the White House at noon on Wednesday, April 19. The body left Washington at 7 o'clock, Friday morning, April 21, and journeyed by way of Baltimore, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, New York, Albany, Buffalo, Cleveland, Columbus, Indianapolis and Chicago. The departure from Chicago was at 8 o'clock p. m. on Tuesday, May 2. Springfield was reached next morning. The Springfield funeral took place on Thursday, May 4. Late in the afternoon of that day, his body was laid to rest in Oak Ridge cemetery.

"Now must the storied Potomac  
 Honors forever divide;  
 Now to the Sangamon fameless  
 Give of its century's pride;  
 Sangamon, stream of the prairies,  
 Placidly westward that flows,  
 Far in whose city of silence  
 Calm he has sought his repose.

"Not for thy sheaves nor savannas  
 Crown we thee, proud Illinois!  
 Here in his grave is thy grandeur,  
 Born of his sorrow thy joy.  
 Only the tomb by Mount Zion  
 Hewn for the Lord do we hold  
 Dearer than his in thy prairies,  
 Girdled with harvests of gold."

### IS ILLINOIS CAPABLE OF PRODUCING MORE LINCOLNS?

Times have changed. We no longer have or need those same conditions, but we need men of the same spirit. Is Illinois adapted to produce men now of the Lincoln type? We have sung tonight our State song which has some merit, and some undeniably fine lines. I could wish that it had more idealism. It is not enough that we have rivers gently flowing or prairies verdant growing and straight roads leading along section lines to Chicago, nor that the breezes murmur the musical name of our State. What does that name mean? To the Indians it meant, 'We are men.' It was a proud boast of the manhood of the State. Are we producing manhood like Lincoln's? I have not undertaken to write a new State song, but I have written a little rhymed sermon, and that is no apology:

Not thy farms with cattle teeming,  
 Illinois, Illinois,  
 Nor thy factories smoking, steaming,  
 Illinois, Illinois,  
 Nor thy railroads hauling freight,  
 Made thee, or can make thee great,  
 Righteous manhood builds a State,  
 Illinois.

By thy rivers gently flowing,  
 Illinois, Illinois,  
 Are there any great men growing,  
 Illinois, Illinois?  
 Long before the white man's ken,  
 Proud thy boast, "My sons are men";  
 This thy glory now as then,  
 Illinois.

Lincoln's ashes thou dost cherish,  
 Illinois, Illinois,  
 Guard his virtues, lest they perish,  
 Illinois, Illinois,  
 Justice, righteousness and skill,  
 Honor, faith and strong good will,  
 These thy guiding beacons still,  
 Illinois.









